

Free Labor!

by Fred Bebnke
Golf Course Superintendent
Mt. Prospect Golf Club

Do divot marks make your fairways look like the surface of the moon?

Does your maintenance center look like Tobacco Road?

Are the corners of your course getting a little fuzzy?

CALL THE POLICE!

No, I don't mean 911 (although there may have been times you have considered it). I mean Sheriff Michael Sheehan's Work Alternative Program, or the Social Service Department of the Circuit Court. Both of these agencies administer a program that gives people convicted of non-violent crimes a chance to "work off" their sentence by performing community service for registered sponsors. If you qualify and register as a sponsor, they will come to your course and work for *FREE*.

The Sheriff's Work Release Program is totally self sufficient. Once you have registered as a sponsor, you call the office to arrange a date, time and location; and a van shows up with a uniformed officer and anywhere from four to twelve offenders. The officer supervises the "crew" the entire time, usually from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. with one hour off for lunch. This system is very useful for those jobs you can't throw enough labor at, i.e., spring cleaning twigs and branches or soil and seeding fairway divots. We have been able to soil and seed ten acres of fairways in one visit using these guys.

The Social Service Department of the Circuit Court's

Program, on the other hand, is individualized and requires more work on the sponsor's part. You are assigned a program coordinator who refers "clients" to you, and you deal directly with the offender. You will not be rubbing elbows with rapists and murderers. Only people convicted of non-violent crimes are allowed to use the program. I've found that a large percentage of the people that I accept for community service work are DUI convictions — regular people that used bad judgment at got caught. You might even get lucky; one of my "clients" turned out to be a carpenter and redecked two bridges for the cost of the lumber. He even provided the tools.

There are some conditions that the sponsor (you) must meet:

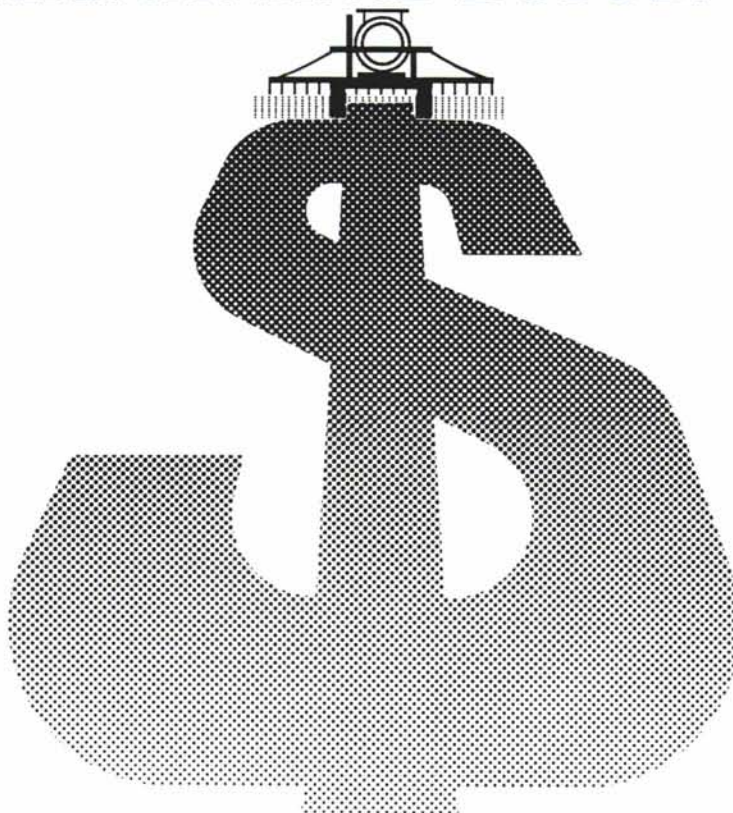
The work to be performed must be for a not-for-profit organization. If your employer is
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Free Labor

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registered as a 501C3 not-for-profit corporation, you are all set. Municipal golf courses can easily meet this requirement. We were approved, no questions asked, even though the golf course is a profit-generating facility for my employer, the Mt. Prospect Park District. If your course has any kind of legal partnership with your local municipality, they could act as a sponsor for work done at your course.

Weekend work must be available. Most of the offenders that you will be helping have regular jobs, and the community service they perform has to be tailored to their schedule. This requirement is no problem for us, unless there is a Superintendent out there who has figured out how to do his/her job Monday through Friday. In which case,

you should be writing a newsletter article for the rest of us.

Some record keeping duties are required. Obviously, the agencies need to be informed of each offender's progress toward the completion of his/her sentence. The Sheriff's program is as easy as a phone call to the office to schedule the next visit. They do their own paperwork. The Social Service Dept., on the other hand, requires more effort on your part because each case is handled individually. I've found that the documentation is far less than that required for a regular employee and can be satisfied with 5 minutes of work per visit.

It's not all rosy; "clients" fall off the face of the earth on occasion, and they do require some supervision. Let's face it; you're not dealing with Eagle Scouts here. I've had the Sheriff's Dept.

show up with 3 vans filled with 22 people one day and one van with 4 people the next. So you have to be flexible. Your membership and management have to be willing to accept the concept. On the day they showed up with 22 people, the Sheriff's Dept. crew with their reflective vests, hard hats and uniformed officers looked like a scene from "Cool Hand Luke."

The people I have dealt with at each agency have been very helpful; and because you are doing them a favor by being a sponsor, they make it as easy for you as possible. "Clients" that aren't working out for any reason are terminated at your request. One phone call to the program coordinator, and you never see them again (don't you wish it was that easy with certain golfers at your club). Your insurance carrier will be happy to learn that all individual

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Director's Column
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Committee, please call me; there is much to be done.

This newly formatted magazine is one example of many that I am enjoying my third year serving on your Board of Directors. I would like to thank all of our members for your support of the recent decisions chosen by your board. We have a very large, aggressive and innovative association. I am looking forward to working with the Long-Range Planning Committee. There are some very good ideas and concepts to refine in a fashion to strengthen our association. These items will be thought through and then brought to the membership for discussion as the year moves along. Anyone with a new idea or program that would impact the MAGCS in a beneficial way, please contact me or another member of

your Board of Directors.

So, as we embark on the 1996 golf season, I hope it goes well for everyone at work. And while at play, keep it in the fairway, any fairway! ■

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participants sign an agreement to indemnify and hold harmless the sponsor and its agents from any injuries sustained while performing their community service.

This may not be an answer for you, but I've found these programs to be especially helpful in handling those back burner jobs before I run out of burners.

For further information contact:
Sheriff Michael Sheehan's
Work Alternative Program
Lt. Bernie Marcos
(847) 865-4960

Robert M. Moncarini
Program Coordinator
Social Service Department
2650 S California Ave., 9th floor
Chicago, IL 60608
(312) 890-6024
or
Dupage County
Cathy Pawlowski
(847) 682-6508

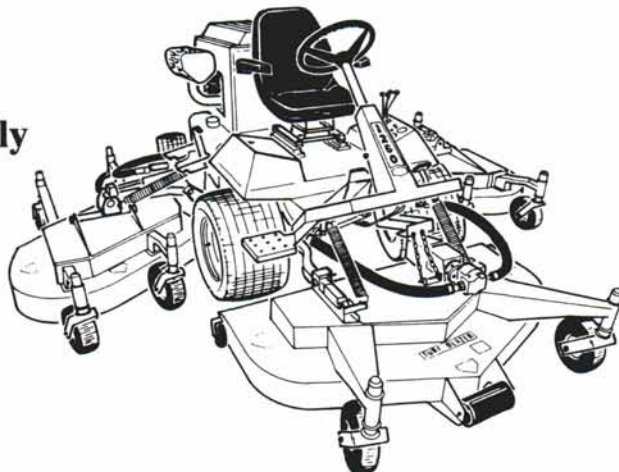
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